"Designer" Chairs Fund Auditorium Seats

AmeriCorps Member Meg Juedes serves at Webster-Stanley Middle School, Oshkosh

Meg Juedes knew she needed to get started on a service project required of AmeriCorps members, but had no idea where to start. What began as a chance visit to the Join Hands Day weblist of 50 projects in January will end in June when 20 uniquely-designed, refurbished wooden chairs go to new homes. Each chair is the product of a creative collaboration between 30 students at Webster-Stanley Middle School, Oshkosh, and senior artists from a nearby senior center. The chairs were donated by Oshkosh community members responding to fliers and newspaper and online requests. Students then sanded and primed the chairs during school lunch hours in the technology teacher's classroom.

A student and senior volunteer turn a used chair into vibrant centerpiece during Join Hands Day at Oshkosh's Webster-Stanley Middle School.

Meg led the 30 students on a field trip to the senior center where they sketched theme-oriented designs on the chairs with their senior artist partner. On May 7, Join Hands Day, students and seniors finished painting the chairs, which were then unveiled during a May 20 Senior Citizen Prom that middle schoolers helped Oshkosh West High School students organize. A silent auction of the chairs which ends on June 20 is expected to net $25 to $75 per chair.

Monies from the chair project will fund renovation of auditorium seating at Webster-Stanley. "The kids will leave a legacy: chairs for chairs," Meg quipped. "It just kind of worked out that way."

She estimated that 10 to 12 hours of labor has gone into renovating each chair. Students were allowed to choose the project, pick a theme for their chair, and design and paint each chair. Chair design themes included decoupaged Audubon songbirds, cooking with Julia Childs, and – her favorite – a Dr. Seuss chair embellished with some of the author's most famous characters. "The kids are brilliant," Meg said. "They just continually came up with so many great ideas."

Parents, school staff, and University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh student volunteers all donated time and effort to realizing the project. "We had a huge spectrum of people helping and supporting us," she said. AmeriCorps members Jake Larsh and Becca Sendra also helped carry out the project.

Her advice for AmeriCorps members embarking on similar service projects? "Put it in the hands of the students," she said. "If they're involved with choosing the project, they'll want to do it." She also recommends starting to plan the project early on because, "You will run out of time," she affirmed.

Oh, the Things We'll Do This Summer!

AmeriCorps members in the Every Student a Graduate effort are laying plans to volunteer, tutor, and enrich student learning this summer. Here are just a few of the many activities some members will be busy with:

☀ Work with Junior Naturalists at the Cable Natural History Museum, and volunteer at the Northwoods Humane Society and at the World Lumberjack Championships in Hayward – **Lynn Miller, Hayward Community Schools**

☀ Help with the summer reading program at Mt. Horeb Public Library and do individual tutoring to keep kids' math and reading skills sharp – **Amber Christensen, Mt. Horeb Area Education Foundation**

☀ Help conduct school "camps" in math, for students entering middle school, and a Teddy Bear camp for Kindergarteners – **Marti Teske, Aldo Leopold School, Green Bay School District.**

Ideas for Sustaining Your Work

A sustainability binder may help those who follow

You may not know "who" will carry on the work you have started when your term of service as an AmeriCorps member ends, but you can certainly help them with "how" it's done. Consider leaving a binder full of information about what you did and the people and resources that helped. It will be your legacy to the volunteer who follows you and make the transition much smoother.
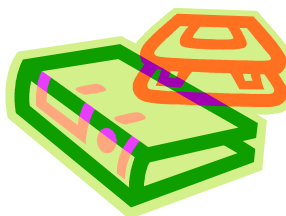
Start with a **"things you might want to know" letter** that could go something like this:

> "Dear Volunteer:
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> These are some things I wish someone shared with me when I was getting started.........Here are resources that were invaluable to me. I really relied on these things to get me through............ Here are some key individuals who will be eager to work with you, too............Here are some tips and timelines for how to do this work effectively.........I think these efforts and initiatives (i.e., tutoring or volunteer recruitment) show the most promise........... and here are some possible next steps to help sustain the work done during my year as an AmeriCorps member................."

Your sustainability binder might contain some of the following information:

- Organizational structure of the school
- Policies and procedures
- Do's and don'ts
- Log-ins and passwords
- Listserv information
- Practices that worked
- Flyers and brochures you used
- Glossary of acronyms or terms
- Timeline of when you did what
- Important deadlines
- Meetings and conferences you attended
- Contact information of people/groups you worked with
- People who helped you get things done
- Helpful publications such as the school/district staff directory and community resource directory
- Useful websites with information on volunteering tutoring, mentoring, etc.

End-of-Service Reminders

Service for Learning and Life AmeriCorps members must have all of their 1,700 hours (900 hours for half-time members) logged by **August 31**. Other to-do items before ending your service are:

✓ Sign and submit End of Term Evaluations completed by my supervisor.

✓ Complete and submit the National Service Trust Exit Form.

✓ Verify that my contact information on the My AmeriCorps portal is accurate so I can manage my Education Award from here.

✓ Contact a DPI AmeriCorps project person (Betsy, Steve or Laura) to confirm my Official Exit Date (the last day of work logged on OnCorps).

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